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THE HAPPY HILLS

AND OTHER POEMS

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DAVID McEWEN OSBORNE



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THE HAPPY HILLS

AND OTHER POEMS



THE HAPPY HILLS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

DAVID McEWEN OSBORNE

LONDON

W. J. BRYCE, 24A REGENT STREET, S.W.1

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TO
MY URBANE, CULTURED AND DEAR FRIEND
VALENTINE F. SPALDING

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE HAPPY HILLS	II
ANY HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE	12
ROSALINE	13
LAD'S LOVE	14
NOCTURNE	15
THE PORCELAIN TOWER	16
A SAILOR'S WIFE	18
THE NEW MISTRESS	21
FAR HAVE I TRAVELL'D	22
FRIEND'S A SWEET NAME	23
INCOMPARABLE	24
IF MY GOOD WORKS	25
WHEN GOD VOUCHSAFED	26
I, WHO HAVE WEPT	27
WHEN THOU ART GONE	28
WERE TIME TURNED BACKWARD	29
FATHER AND SON	30
A.H.P.	31
FANCIES	32
H.G.H. I.	33
H.G.H. II.	34
MAY WALKER, DANSEUSE	35
A LONDON GIRL	36
BACK TO THE LAND	37
ALL THE YEAR ROUND	38
BEER AND BEAUTY	39
HYMN FOR MEN ONLY	41
NOX AMBROSIANA	42
ANY CANTANKEROUS SCOT	44

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE TURN OF THE SCREW	45
SONNET	46
A PRAYER BEFORE BATTLE	47
THE FIELD OF HONOUR	48
ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD	49
COMRADES	50
PRIVATE CHARLES SLATER	51
SHORT LEAVE	53
THE DOVES OF WAR	54
PRIVATE CLAYE	55
R.R.W. . . .	56
MORT AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR	57
FLOWERS OF FRANCE	58
A LILY OF THE FIELD	60
THE LAST RAG OF HONOUR	62

THE HAPPY HILLS

THE happy hills were carven,
The jocund clouds were curl'd,
When you and I together
Forsook and found the world.

The birds sang loud behind us,
The birds sang loud before ;
The flowers were red and purple,
But white the dress you wore.

Our hands knit fast : enchantment
Fell strong on cloud and hill ;
The flowers watch'd and waited,
And all the earth was still.

The curléd clouds grew cunning,
The carven hills grew sly :
Our lips declar'd and answer'd,
And all the earth went by.

Our hearts like roses blossomed,
Our eyes like stars above :
The light in yours was single,
The light in mine was love.

ANY HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE

TO-DAY, as arm in arm we walk'd,
An old thing struck me strangely new;
You look'd up to me as you talk'd,
And I, of course, look'd down on you.

And so through life you shall look up,
And see in me creation's lord,
And drink when I have fill'd the cup,
And eat when I have bless'd the board.

And though you think the prospect drear,
It is quite futile to repine;
For you are five feet three, my dear,
While I am fully five feet nine.

But when we tread where quick ne'er trod,
And brave the Master's fatal frown,
You will be looking up at God,
And I for shame be looking down.

ROSALINE

LITTLE slipper, little glove,
Dainties, ye adorn'd my love ;
Once were warm in you, I know,
Here her finger, there her toe.
Glove elect and sweetly worn,
Thou wast lucky, I forlorn :
When her hand she gave me now
I was farther off than thou.
Slipper, when a golden chance
Gave her to me in the dance,
Though my bliss was very nigh,
Thou wast nearer yet than I.
Glove and slipper, who dispense
Perfumes of her innocence,
If I wore you on my heart
Would her musk and myrrh depart ?
If I shamed you with a kiss
Would she laugh or weep for this ?
Would she blush and understand,
Little foot and little hand ?

LAD'S LOVE

GIVE but thy hand, and I my heart will give ;
And for thy hand's five fingers when I kiss,
Five times my heart, by which I love and live,
Shall break to pay the price of so much bliss.

NOCTURNE

BESIDE her window, amorous watch to keep,
The rose hath climb'd, and woos my mistress there,
Whose eyes are locked in jealous-lidded sleep,
But all her soul of beauty else lies bare :
Forlorn her linen, empty of her breath,
Looks but the body of that lovely death.

Her warmed garments mourn their lost content,
Who lies in state upon her dreaming bed,
And hath put off their use and ornament
To wear her pomp of innocence instead.
Sleeping she seems for earth too heavenly fair,
And only breathes to bless the suppliant air.

She lies so still, yet still is eloquent ;
For her dear tongue, that now forgets to teach,
Least member is of her sweet parliament,
And every part of her a part of speech.
But when she wakes, her prose of nakedness
Puts on again the poetry of dress.

THE PORCELAIN TOWER

THE Princess of the Porcelain Tower

Leans out and shakes her tresses :
Her face is sweeter than a flower,
And cloth-of-gold her dress is.

Sir Paris eyes her tresses shaken ;
He finds her passing fair :
Conquer'd is he, and captive taken,
And bound with maidenhair.

Says he : " Sweet lady, be my bride ;
I, by my sword, adore thee ;
My horse through all the world shalt ride,
And I will walk before thee."

Says she ; " My body would fain espouse thee ;
Thou art a proper man ;
And spend to feed and clothe and house me
Thou gold and silver can."

Says he : " If wishes were wealth untold,
I were as rich as any :
If honour bold be less than gold,
I am as poor as a penny."

Says she : " What bird unfed will tarry,
Or dog forego his bone ?
Now I another knight shall marry,
But thou must live alone."

THE PORCELAIN TOWER

Says he : " Now make my arms thy bed,
And learn at once what bliss is—
They have no need of daily bread
Who live on cake and kisses."

Says she : " Well taught in lore and letter,
I learnt this wise behest :
Kisses are good and cake is better,
But daily bread is best."

A SAILOR'S WIFE

"FAREWELL," I faltered ; eye and lip
Were widow'd of their wonted art
Whose lord and I must love apart ;
He is the captain of a ship,
And captain of my heart.

The milk and marble of the foam,
The fret and fury of the sea
Untrodden save at Galilee,
Are his. They bear him far from home,
And very far from me.

Myself untravell'd, yet I know
How wide his bold adventures range
To countries where our seasons change ;
The fishes fly, the waters glow,
The very stars are strange.

On clear horizons gather shape
High mountains, forest, vale and stream ;
And white the crookéd temples gleam
In lands of slave and snake and ape
Where all things alien seem.

The flowers and fruit build up the marge
Of isles enchanted, dreaming, mute ;
And then to cymbal, drum and flute
The black folk on their painted barge
Row out with flowers and fruit.

A SAILOR'S WIFE

He roams the world ; my lone desire
 Regrets, expects him every day.
 My little son at prayer and play
 Remembers and forgets his sire
 Who goes, but I must stay.

My loneliness would some console
 Who cheapen dear the name of friend
 To serve a salt ambition's end.
 My honour's his, I keep it whole,
 Whose home I made and mend.

Kind almoner, whose daily bread
 I eat and live, he shall not seek
 Hot shame confounded in my cheek.
 I know my duty to his bed.
 I know strong men are weak.

The foreign women braid their hair
 With cunning, gild their dust with guile ;
 And Eves in tropic Edens smile :
 Suppose he find them more than fair,
 And count them less than vile ?

I trust him. Mine from year to year,
 His far affection, tender made,
 Brings home from lands that flame and fade
 Choice tokens of remembrance dear,
 Amber and pearl and jade.

Our hearts beat twice in either breast.
 Uxorious knaves of shop and pen
 Who never stray beyond their ken
 Are lords of women : mine is best :
 He is a man of men.

A SAILOR'S WIFE

He comes, he greets me with a kiss,
His arms embrace and hold me : soon
We melt, we flow in talk and tune ;
And all our long delay of bliss
Renews our honeymoon.

He thinks me good, he calls me sweet,
And all I am of sweet and good,
The treasure of my womanhood,
Goes unafraid and glad to meet
The ardour of his blood.

But once the heart's high hazards call.
I vow'd my vows, I am not free.
My hopes are only ships at sea.
My love his life risks, I risk all,
And am as brave as he.

What Mercy guards him from eclipse
I pray at last will set him down
With modest fortune, some renown,
To watch the passing of the ships
From windows of the town.

My lips have learnt to kiss the rod ;
My feet in paths appointed move,
Where joy and sorrow noble prove ;
My soul I consecrate to God,
My body to my love.

THE NEW MISTRESS

ONCE to the brides of ancient song and story
My heart in youth a light allegiance paid,
But thy incomparable and conquering glory
With orient beam their lovely ghosts hath laid.
Methought in dreams that Tyre and Babylon
Were more than mortal fair or youth's brief show ;
Methought in dreams my single life put on
Their dark sad pomp and livery of woe.
I was asleep, but now my soul awakes :
Their stars are faint, thy golden sun doth rise ;
Their tongues are silent, thine sweet music makes ;
Their eyes are ashes, thine are summer skies.
Their fame's immortal : thine shall live as long
In my proud heart and my immortal song.

FAR HAVE I TRAVELL'D

FAR have I travell'd both in place and time,
And many years and many countries seen :
And ladies dead, renown'd in prose and rhyme,
In summers gone my fancied loves have been.
Beneath more tropic suns, more turquoise skies,
In southern lands of corn and oil and wine,
My eyes have won regard from ladies' eyes,
That lovely seem'd before I look'd in thine.
But ne'er saw I in any former days,
Or foreign town with builded marble tall,
The like of thee whom I and London praise,
Which being thy home is fairest town of all.
Not all the past nor all the world can show
Thy match to me who like and love thee so.

FRIEND'S A SWEET NAME

FRIEND'S a sweet name, yet never seem'd so sweet
Till I was thine, thou mine, O little friend,
Who would be more than friend could love complete
Our good beginning to its perfect end.
Then should we two in happy honour stay,
And pluck together flowers of true delight,
And I be comrade of thy night and day,
And thou be sun by day and moon by night.
Friendship is good ; love better ; marriage best :
Since the blest gods, in envy of our bliss,
Deny what bliss would make us equal-blest,
Me grant thy hand, and give thy lips to kiss.
Be friendly so, sweet friend, and ease my pain,
Who would be more yet still must friend remain.

INCOMPARABLE

THOU art my sum and measure of delight,
The orb'd renown and wonder of these days,
Whom no great verse could glorify aright,
No music nor no marble fitly praise.
Thy beauty radiant, sovereign, past compare,
A diamond match'd with stones of base degree,
Arraigns and doth condemn all other fair
Whose more or less unequals perfect thee.
Then never dream that women's lips or eyes
Can tempt my love from eyes and lips divine,
Or change my heart where charm'd from change it lies
Not in my breast but in the heaven of thine.
Thy only peer, whom in thy glass I see,
Makes me not false but keeps me true to thee.

IF MY GOOD WORKS

If my good works could match my love's goodwill,
And love's goodwill could time and death defy,
Preserv'd by all things good from all things ill,
Thy pomp of youth should never age nor die.
All other fair might weep their charm's decay,
And render up at last reluctant breath,
When, having liv'd and lov'd their little day,
Their pride should bow beneath the stroke of death.
But thy proud April should from change be stay'd,
Or only change to June more sweet and fair :
The dark flowers of thine eyes should never fade,
Nor never fade the gold flowers of thy hair.
My single love would let all women die
Save only thee, who shouldst live on for aye.

WHEN GOD VOUCHSAFED

WHEN God vouchsafed thy birthday gift of birth,
He gave men's eyes and the fair world they see ;
For theirs is thine, who leaving lesser worth,
Look once and then look evermore on thee.
How would mankind, of beauty dispossess'd,
With bitter grief have mourn'd their ugly fate,
But that thy hair, thy brow, thy lips, thy breast,
With equal beauty bless'd their new estate !
They need no sun, where shines thy lovelier head,
Nor stars, who see thy eyes more sweet and strange :
Their world is thine, but having thee instead,
They love their loss, and praise the just exchange,
Save only one, to whose more loving thought
Thyself art all, and all the world is nought.

I, WHO HAVE WEPT

I, who have wept, would never have thee weep,
Whose eyes are now day-stars of my delight,
But only laugh, and laughing ever keep
Their mastery and their mockery wanton-bright.
Thou, rich in beauty, scorn'st my poor estate,
And cheat'st my hopes of Eve and Eden lost ;
And I, the fool of fortune and of fate,
With many tears must pay misfortune's cost.
Yet grief hath made my heart so kind to thee,
Who still unkind dost grieve my careful heart,
I'd rather have thee careless-cruel to me,
Than change thy nature to my love's sad art.
Then love me not : or, if thou lov'st again,
Be thine love's pleasure, only mine love's pain.

WHEN THOU ART GONE

WHEN thou art gone, and my sad eyes forego
The light of thine, and look their last on thee,
And weep in vain to weep away what woe
Will come to stay when thou art gone from me ;
Then I shall seek, half blinded though with tears,
Thy image in the world of things most fair,
And search the hopeful springs of hopeless years .
To find the grace of thy sweet April there.
Then the green fields will tease my heart's unrest,
And gaudy flowers torment my lone desire ;
The lily's white recall thy lovelier breast,
The rose's red regret thy mouth's sweet fire.
All present beauty, once so kind to see,
Will only mock my love for absent thee.

WERE TIME TURNED BACKWARD

WERE time turned backward, and the bond set free,
Who now wear out the length of penal days,
Myself were bold to give and ask of thee
The all in all that happy lovers praise.
Then would my heart stop and the stars stand still
In pained suspense to hear thy strange reply,
Which were it Yea would every hope fulfil,
And were it Nay would every hope deny.
Fate spares my heart, which many a wound hath known,
The bloody hazard of that great emprise,
And sends me forth inglorious, lost, alone,
Save for the blessed memory of thine eyes.
So, like an empty house, my empty heart
Decays to dust, and dreams and dies apart.

FATHER AND SON

My father, bless'd of fortune, had a son
Undutiful, ungrateful : I have none.

A.H.P.

YOUNG is my love, but not so young as fair ;
Fair is she, very proud, and still more sweet ;
Silver her laughter and golden her hair
Float as she runs on light and little feet.
Earth's but her painted toy, a child's bright ball,
Moon and the sun but coins for her to spend ;
High heav'n is hers too, yet she is not tall—
Tiptoe she stands to kiss me though I bend.
Sister whom boyhood wished in vain is she,
Daughter, hope once of days that knew no care :
When she pluck'd just now flowers two or three,
Torn was my heart—perhaps the roots were there.
Time and the world will take her soon away
To pluck fresh flowers ; but these she pluck'd to-day.

FANCIES

OF gods of earth, air, water,
From whom all gifts are won,
I ask in vain a daughter,
And beg in vain a son.

In songs alone and dances
I hear their feet afar ;
And but a poet's fancies
My sons and daughters are.

H.G.H.

I

YOUR hands that were so soft and smooth and white,
Idle that all might envy and admire,
Your lover have and other men desire,
Your lover clasp and kiss with fond delight,
Grow hard with scouring kitchen vessels bright,
And rough with daily kindling household fire,
And red with busy washing soil'd attire,
You cry with broken voice, averted sight.
Helen, your slim young hands are very dear :
The left to him who gave your marriage-ring ;
The right to me for friendship ; both a-cling
To the little son you bore with hope and fear ;
And if a kiss or tear may beauty bring
Your hands shall never lack a kiss or tear.

H.G.H.

II

OUR foolish virgins' folly grows the rage ;
And Portia now, who save her chosen man
No master knew, toils out her mortal span,
Writes Shylock's bond in black on her white page,
And wrongs her unripe breast to earn a wage.
No household recks her benison or ban ;
No children thrive to mar her thriftless plan,
Nor children's children make her crown of age.
O wiser thou ! to pity young love's pain ;
To bless with vows, exchange his passion sore ;
Thy body's beauty lent to take again
With the womb's usury and increase of store ;
And lusty babes, defying time's disdain,
Bravely to bear as erst thy mother bore.

MAY WALKER, DANSEUSE

A DANCER now, who was a walker born,
She lifts her nature level with her art,
Disdains the sullen earth with laughing scorn,
And, light of foot, is lighter still of heart.

A LONDON GIRL

WAIF of the city, wild-flower of the town,
Rose cheeks, gold hair, thou gay and golden rose,
What angel or what devil led thee down
From heights of perfect summer, perfect snows ?
What angel lit the beacon of thy face
To cheer faint hearts across this causey'd fen,
And gave thee innocence and gave thee grace
To walk unmir'd the muddy ways of men ?
What devil led to these grey stones thy feet,
Whose birthright is green grass, and glittering rills,
Primrosy woods, bluebells and violets sweet,
And sweet deep valleys, and more sweet high hills ?
Thou canst not tell : thou, even as I, dost roam
An alien land and far from thy true home.

BACK TO THE LAND

SOME would live in the callous towns,
And some would sail the cruel seas :
Give me the rain along the downs,
The wind among the trees :

The rain that stings like honest wit,
The wind that strikes like honest humour,
A paunch well lined, a pipe well lit ;
Faith free from doubt and rumour ;

A purse secure from fortune's frowns,
An inn, old friends, and rustic ease :
These things are damn'd in the tall towns,
And drown'd in the deep seas.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

WHEN autumn skies are sober,
And orchard boughs are bare,
I drink the strong October
That keeps out cold and care.

When April skies are dapple,
And orchard blooms fulfil
The boughs of pear and apple,
I drink October still.

BEER AND BEAUTY

TRUE gold is more than glitter ;
True malt is more than meat :
The brewer's beer is bitter,
It is not bitter-sweet.

The brewer's beer is glitter ;
The brewer's house is dire ;
The brewer's man is bitter,
And only serves for hire.

He sweats a public duty,
And fleeces wight and wench :
The thirst for beer and beauty
The brewer does not quench.

No more his house shall hold me
The servant of his sin :
My father's father told me
About an English inn.

An inn for rich and poor men ;
An inn that sells good beer ;
An inn to kill or cure men
With mountains of good cheer.

An inn of love and laughter ;
An inn of host and dame ;
An inn, I swear, hereafter,
An inn of ancient fame.

BEER AND BEAUTY

An inn where eyes embolden ;
An inn where hearts are high ;
An inn where girls are golden,
And only dust is dry.

An inn of power ; an inn of glory ;
An inn with seven chins ;
An inn of song ; an inn of story ;
An English inn of inns.

HYMN FOR MEN ONLY

p ALMIGHTY God, Thy nod is
Supreme to bless or ban :
ff Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

Laid on with love thy rod is,
And spares not class or clan :
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

When even luck and odd is
We keep Thy simple plan :
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

Our souls wed Thee, our bodies
Wed Moll or Sue or Nan :
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

Our flesh but clay and clod is,
Our life's a little span :
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

When under soil and sod is
Our mate at cup and can,
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

The earth Thy one Son trod is
The native earth we scan :
Thy Fatherhood, O God, is
The brotherhood of man.

NOX AMBROSIANA

THE lamps are lit, and the fire is leaping,
The fish and flesh to the board invite,
And you and I, while the town is sleeping,
Shall sup together and wake the night.

Then fill your cups ! At the dawn we're parted,
Heroes drunken with words and wine.
O brave, sweet fellows ! O true, warm-hearted !
No man ever had friends like mine !

The fools of fame and the foes of fortune,
And born of woman and doomed to die,
We snatch, while the world and its ways importune,
A bliss the world and its ways pass by.

Be ours a swagger of wit well nourished,
An open heart and an open hand,
Reason and rhyme and a folly flourished ;
Things no woman can understand.

The heart's desire and the thirst for beauty
Gather us here till the day is plain :
The curse of man and the call of duty
Scatter us each to his place again.

Lovers may lose and deplore their treasure,
And half remember and half forget ;
But we, the lords of a careless pleasure,
Are merry, and part without regret.

NOX AMBROSIANA

Though life be labour, and love be sorrow,
And times are hard, and the world is wide,
We'll meet again on a glad to-morrow,
Let shire or shore or the seas divide.

We'll meet, or here or perhaps hereafter,
Boast of the ladies and lands we've seen ;
Renew debate and our ancient laughter ;
Jest, and forget the years between.

Be sun the weather, or snow the weather,
The best of luck or the worst befall,
We'll sing together and shout together,
And drink together, comrades all !

ANY CANTANKEROUS SCOT.

“LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediment.”

Oh, let me to the marriage of true minds
Declare impediment, and concord spurn ;
For love and all the soft delights she finds
Are nought beside high words and ears that burn.
Oh, let me rather, lord of challenge hurled,
While other men like Rizzio touch the lute
Within the arras'd chambers of the world,
Engender and perpetuate dispute ;
Expire the breath of life in wordy wars ;
Seek Truth and slay and flay her and disjoint ;
And 'neath the silent and ironic stars,
Argue the point, and subdivide the point,
And on each subdivision argue still,
Confounding black with white and good with ill.

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

Now Henry James with black art turns the screw,
And his blue devils paint the whole world blue.
The age of our great sires, three-bottle men,
Was happier far : they turned the corkscrew then.

SONNET

THOU naked flesh and gross by lust begotten,
Thou thing of sweat and blood with travail born,
Thou life so soon diseas'd and dead and rotten,
Thou death which yet art never shards of scorn,
Thou stay'd by bread but not by bread alone,
Thou fool whose folly sums the count of stars,
Thou feeble hand that build'st enduring stone,
Thou shame whose honour sheds the blood of wars,
Thou vaunt whose little day outplans to-morrow,
Thou hope whose laughter chides and cheats despair,
Thou hunger, thirst, and born to toil and sorrow,
Thou song of praise and everlasting prayer,
Thou point and paradox of Nature's plan,
Thy name is Mystery, thy name is Man.

A PRAYER BEFORE BATTLE

BE Thou my good ; and not the sweet and smart
Of mine own ways with all the world beside :
The vain imaginations of my heart,
The farthing toys of pride.

Unthankful I have eat the bread of peace ;
Drunk deep the wine of life, and wasted more
In wanton riot ; long without surcease
Have chewed the husks of war.

Not I would bear the sum of mortal chance,
Of mortal days, undutiful, unjust,
Nor shuffle off with sombre circumstance
To mingle dust with dust.

O sweet ! To render all upon a breath
When these my brothers and Thy sons go out
To meet the silver dawn and sable death
With trumpets and a shout.

Or, if Thou wilt, restore my heritage :
Earth and thereof the fullness, moon and sun,
And wife and child and darling crown of age :
Thy will, not mine, be done.

THE FIELD OF HONOUR

OUR sister chaste and happy,
And wooed of sun and moon,
Deflowered her beauty, lieth
Stark in the horrid noon.

And stark her forest chambers
Of leafy tapestries
Whence cooed the mated pigeons
Their love in summer ease.

The daisied field is stricken
That fed the uddered kine
Whose milk at morn and even
Was only less than wine.

The green wheat and the golden,
The barley and the rye,
Are reaped, but not by reapers,
And dead too soon to die.

Earth of her splendid fullness
Is void : no more is lust :
And sons the pride of mothers
As dust return to dust.

Beast of the field hath perished,
Herb of the grass is slain ;
And lads and love and laughter :
But honour doth remain.

ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD

(MAY-DAY, 1917)

Who loveth whom He chasteneth
Hath smote the earth again
With golden rods of sunshine
And silver rods of rain.

Our little laughing sister
Hath doffed and put away
The black she wore for penance
And white for Easterday.

She binds her hair with cunning
And dons her gown of green
That all the flowers embroider
And all the dews wash clean.

Her golden-throated skylark
That sings and soars so high
With praise and adoration
Perfects the splendid sky.

For seed and soul that quicken
By Him have death withstood
Who blessed the whole creation
And saw that it was good.

COMRADES

Two lads of shire and city,
 They fought with me beside :
One wed a whore for pity,
 And one a maid for pride.

But ere the war was over,
 Their pride with pity laid,
Slept under clay and clover,
 And not with whore or maid.

PRIVATE CHARLES SLATER

(Waiter in the Corporals' Mess, XV. Corps Headquarters)

THE wine of Charlie Slater is the wine that I would quaff,
The vintage of old Billingsgate wherewith he shouts
the odds ;

His cockney wit that never wounds, but only makes you
laugh,

The joy of all his comrades, and the envy of the gods.

The blood in Charlie's veins is Adam's, king of paradise :
He fronts the great ones of the earth without reserve
or fear ;

And rocks no chevrons one or twain, heraldical device,
Nor ermine, orb and sceptre of a Royal Engineer.

Oh, Charlie is my darling, but leads no '45

To seek a throne and find defeat on dread Culloden's
field ;

Through lifelong exile's wasted days regret himself alive,
And dissipate with dice and wine the grief that never
healed.

It's over the water Charlie is, but not to flee his foes ;
And far his native land, but not for ever and a day ;
He serves with us to save for aye our sacred English
rose

From who cut down the apple trees, the sweetest thing
in May.

PRIVATE CHARLES SLATER

The pearl and turquoise sky and amethyst sea of France
May glow and gleam and glitter like a million million
gems ;

But his heart is home in England and sees with inward
glance

The dome with the ball and cross and the yellow
tides of Thames.

Great guns thunder and tall towers reel ; and who made
war ask peace,

Seeing them one with Carthage while we are one with
Rome ;

And the moment is at hand for the order of release,
When the cry is Victory, Victory, and we all go home.

SHORT LEAVE

OF Adam's fall and Eden lost
We count and pay the dreadful cost,
But through our travail and our tears
God's awful mercy still appears,
And unto everyone are given
The memory and hope of heaven.

But not to all on earth, or few,
Is given what I receive of you :
Strong built with love and not with hands
A haven and a house that stands,
And, where all men as exiles roam,
The little, lovely heaven of home.

THE DOVES OF WAR

WHEN home and island city
Renew their equal breath
The doves of war go dropping
The iron seed of death.

The seed springs up, the Upas
An instant rears his span,
And faint and fall together
Man and the works of man.

In vain with ceaseless vigil
They dare the night's alarms,
Who far on fields of honour
Exalt the pride of arms.

A mother's eld is stricken,
But not with years ; forlorn,
She feared to mourn a soldier
Who now herself must mourn.

Must mourn, besides, another
And all her lovely prime,
Whose breast is dry, and barren
Her womb before her time.

And those, on her begotten
When life and love were sweet,
No more shall vex with laughter,
Or haste of little feet.

Strong walls are rent asunder ;
High roofs fall down and kill ;
The stones cry out in anguish :
The boys and girls are still.

PRIVATE CLAYE

(KILLED 27TH JUNE, 1917)

FROM clay in strength our native oak-tree grows
To height and girth and spread of largest span ;
The sweet and crimson riot of the rose ;
And wheat, the bread and sacrament of man.
Clay built our homes, and towns of civil folk,
Where born were manners, arts and liberty :
Clay are the pipes whence age can blow but smoke,
And children colour'd orbs of ecstasy.
This is fine clay : our common clay is finer,
Which England mine hath modelled not in strife
To strive for England, and the great Designer
Into the nostrils breathed the breath of life.
CLAYE, I salute what everlasting fame
Informs thine ancient and illustrious name.

R.R.W.

(KILLED 26TH APRIL, 1917)

I MAY not mourn to-morrow,
But I must mourn to-day,
My friend who left me sorrow,
And took my joy away.

He praiseth now in heaven
Our Lady and Our Lord,
And all his virtues seven
Receive their long reward.

MORT AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR

(INSCRIPTION ON THE GRAVE OF A FRENCH SOLDIER,
AGED TWENTY YEARS)

YOUNG man of France, an older man's desire
Salutes thy grave on Marne's heroic field
Which, reaped with swords and ploughed with burning
fire,

And sown with salt of battle, still doth yield
The flower of honour. Sharp, usurious death
Too soon foreclosed upon thy man's estate,
And sweeter usufruct of blood and breath.
Thy dear life pledged, but at too high a rate,
Hath saved the land whose glory now is thine.
Thy storied towns again their arts employ :
Thy happy fields renew their corn and wine :
Thy father and thy mother may enjoy
Their own with liberty : but count it vain,
Thou and thy heirs unborn, unbred being slain.

FLOWERS OF FRANCE

FLOWERS of France, devoted land,
Slender, brave and proud you stand,
Fed of dew and rain and sun,
Till I pluck you, one and one.

Little friends of vale and hill
Dear you are ; but dearer still
One, the hope of absent hours,
Walks among the English flowers.

She is very fair and far,
Sweeter than a single star
At the sombre close of day :
She is good and wise and gay.

Little friends of wood and mead,
If you would be friends indeed,
Types of serpent and of dove,
Bear me hence a kiss of love.

Bear a kiss of love to her
Who, to me Love's almoner,
Now forsaken hoards apart
Treasures of her flaming heart.

Though you wither, wilt, and fade,
Be assured and unafraid :
All good flowers when they die
Shine as stars within the sky.

FLOWERS OF FRANCE

You shall have to sweeten death
Absolution of her breath,
And what precious unction slips
Fragrant from her blessed lips.

When the burden that you bear,
Innocents of earth and air
Sown of Adam and of Eve,
Blessed lips divine, receive.

A LILY OF THE FIELD

To God Who brought all things to birth,
By Whom they blossom and they bear,
I vow, I consecrate my worth :
Mine is the rich and stable earth,
And mine the sweet and ample air.

I strive through recollected days
To glorify His name apart ;
On slender hopeful arms to raise
A perfect flower of perfect praise,
The passion of my cloistered heart.

I am content : I would not cease
The long devotion that I owe.
The butterflies that know not peace
Must range the world without increase ;
But I am rooted and I grow.

I grow in beauty and in grace
By equal good of sun and shower.
I must not leave my narrow place,
But do not lack a kindred face,
A brother or a sister flower.

My meditation also keep
The browsing, meek and monstrous kine.
Among the little clovers leap
The frolic lambs, the foolish sheep,
With hearts as sacrosanct as mine.

A LILY OF THE FIELD

And one with me by songs avowed
The birds perfect obedience :
Above the fields the larks are loud ;
They are not wise, they are not proud ;
They also have their innocence.

But only strange are they who wear
The pomp of exiled queens and kings :
The tall, the strong, the proud, the fair,
Who, eating daily bread of care,
Are troubled about many things.

THE LAST RAG OF HONOUR

THE Lord of Hosts and the Virtues Seven,
At war for aye with the Sons of Scorn,
Made earth the frontier of hell and heaven,
And called a levy of men unborn.

I pledg'd my word, and my blood and breath :
I swore to serve in a world of strife,
Obey, endure, and be true till death,
And guard the honour of birth and life.

He gave me flesh, and He gave a sword,
And good things common, and fine things dear :
I marched in step and a true accord
With comrades, men of my town and year.

Recruits, we charg'd with a song and shout,
And fought defeated or fighting fell ;
And some have rallied the dreadful rout ;
And one was false, as the rest know well.

I fled in fear at the darkest hour :
Perhaps the turn of the fight was then ;
And men are masters of place and power,
And we but rebels and broken men.

My sword is broken, my heart is broken,
I sum my past, and the counts upbraid
The mean things done, and the false words spoken,
And foes unchalleng'd and friends betray'd.

THE LAST RAG OF HONOUR

Yet since the levy was called, I taken,
Forsworn, I cherish the oath I swore :
Shall fight again in a cause forsaken ;
May fail again as I failed before.

The war is long, and the issue hidden :
The proud men mock at a poor man's pride,
And urge the profit of things forbidden :
I shall not fight on the proud men's side.

Be theirs the brass and the blazoned shields !
I only crave, for my name and fame,
From fields dishonour'd and stricken fields
A rag of honour to hide my shame.

A thing of toil and a golden tongue,
And half a dreamer and half a drudge,
I read and sing them, unread, unsung,
My brothers judged of the unjust judge.

My peers and poets at board and bed
Befriend, and flourish the wine of words.
I pray to God for my daily bread :
He feeds His poets Who feeds His birds.

The World is bought and the World is sold
With lust of pleasure and fear of pain,
And basely flatters the great for gold,
And fawns for favour, and fawns in vain.

The Flesh adorns and parades her dust
With hope more hollow than all despair
In streets of fashion where love is lust
And only the rich deserve the fair.

THE LAST RAG OF HONOUR

The Devil's men and their worthless wives
Are lords and ladies of paint and prose :
They nod, the lackey of art arrives ;
They nod again, and the lackey goes.

The World, the Flesh and the Devil accord ;
The World, the Flesh and the Devil recall
My broken heart and my broken sword :
A rag of honour defies them all !

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